only other model, located in the section Avant-Garde, was a replica of the façade of the Maison Cubiste by Duchamp-Villon shown at the Salon d'Automne in 1912. The model was not very informative because it lacked both context and illustrations of the rooms behind its strangely faceted forms, which anticipated Czech Cubist designs such as those by Pavel Janák shown in an adjacent vitrine.

Fragments included an aluminum frieze panel by the British Walter Gilbert, made by Bromsgrove Guild in 1933 for Derry & Toms on Kensington High Street, and the wrought-iron and bronze gates at the entrance to the executive suite in the Channing Building, designed by René Paul Chambellan in 1928. The most stunning of these fragments consisted of the entrance foyer of the Strand Savoy Palace Hotel (1930–31), an essay in gleaming chromium and internally lit molded-glass blocks with a mirrored revolving door. Its author, Oliver Percy Bernard, a stage designer in Britain and the United States, also decorated Lyons Corner Houses, thus making Deco delights accessible to the wage-earner as well as the rentier.

Furniture and objects by architects included Gunnar Asplund's Senna chair (1925) of leather, mahogany, and ivory exhibited in the Swedish Pavilion and, from the Italian pavilion, a large porcelain vase by Gino Ponti and Libero Andreotti. The sideboard and bizarre armchair by Michel de Klerk (ca. 1915–17), together with the other Amsterdam School objects in the Dutch Pavilion, might have been grouped with "sources" rather than realized Art Deco. The pavilion itself, by J. F. Staal, shown in two small photographs, demonstrated the architect's ability to confute De Stijl strategies with the vocabulary of the Amsterdam School.

Some of the objects in the V&A show will not make the transatlantic journey, but there will be appropriate alternatives of local provenance. *Art Deco, 1910–1939* opened seven days after the commencement of the war in Iraq, and its vast success, signaled by ecstatic reviews and long waiting lines, may at first have seemed deplorably escapist. Yet, in its heyday, the style—and style it is, and it was presented here as such—also provided pleasure during a troubled political and economic era. The V&A's promise of "fantasy and fun" has been amply fulfilled in this exhibition.

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Notes

Publication relating to the exhibition:

**Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier: Applied Arts, Architecture, Painting, and Photography, 1907–1922**

Langmatt Museum, Baden, Switzerland

30 March–30 June 2002

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, New York

22 November 2002–23 February 2003

Before he was Le Corbusier, self-described as a condor perched on an Alp, master of all that he surveyed, Le Corbusier was Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, the slim, bespectacled son of a bourgeois Swiss family. His first design clients were family and friends in what was then the watch capital of Europe, La Chaux-de-Fonds, and the story of his early career (cost-overruns, disagreements about style, experiments with new materials, failed business ventures) reads as a template for the first ten years of many architects’ professional lives today. Too often caricatured as the cold, controlling designer of all-white, overly rigid, and righteously modern houses, the Jeanneret seen in *Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier* was looser, funnier, and more conflicted, still choosing his language from the shapes and shadows of history.

Organized by Stanislaus von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, both of whom have written extensively on the later Le Corbusier, the exhibition began as a small display of his little-known furniture designs from 1912 to 1927, intended for installation at Baden’s Langmatt Museum. It grew from there, as the curators discovered more unknown material from the teens in the architect’s Paris archives. Organized not as narrative but, as von Moos writes, as “col- lage,” the strongest parts of the exhibition detailed with the curators’ interests. Rüegg, an expert on Le Corbusier’s furniture designs, provided precise comparisons between the furniture and the architecture of Corb’s Swiss villas. The show as installed at the Bard Graduate Center was endowed with a spectacular assortment of chairs and cabinets, including what may be one of the first *casiers standards* (Le Corbusier’s domesticated office furniture) from the 1925 Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau in Paris.

Von Moos is more concerned with Le Corbusier’s travels, and in his catalogue essay traces the appearance and reappearance of images and observations from the architect’s two European circuits—one begun in 1907, the other in 1911—in the writings and designs of the 1920s. The ocean liner, the airplane, and the car, so insistently present in Le Corbusier’s own iconography, reflected a fetish for travel and motion indulged by many during this period.

The second-floor section of the exhibition opened with a map marked by Le Corbusier to show his routes and purposes, indicating with a letter which stops were for folklore (F), which for
Amédée Ozenfant, Albert Jeanneret, and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret in the studio at the Villa Jeanneret-Perret, August 1919. Bibliothèque de la Ville, La Chaux-de-Fonds

culture (C), and which for industry (I). Germany was labeled with all I’s, Eastern Europe with all F’s. Each of his touristic agendas was in some sense suggested by one of his mentors of the time. The head of the local applied-arts academy, Charles L’Éplattenier, turned him toward architecture and introduced him to the writings of John Ruskin. Concrete pioneer and architect Auguste Perret served as an example of designer as industrial innovator. Artist and critic William Ritter pointed Corb toward countries outside the typical Grand Tour, like the Balkans, for their vibrant vernacular architecture.

In his travel notebooks, we could see the architect learning how to observe and to record, photographing one day, sketching the next, painting the third, filling his notebooks with images of Ruskinian detail or Neo-Impressionist feeling. When he left La Chaux-de-Fonds permanently in 1917, Le Corbusier did not abandon this image bank, but drew upon it in publications and architectural designs for years to come, even after he had sloughed off the friends.

The photographs, reprints from more than five hundred images owned by the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris, are a major addition to the trove of published Corbusiana. First using a cheap Kodak, then a less-distorting Cupido 80, Le Corbusier documented streets, squares, monuments, and fountains, intending the shots to illustrate points in “La Construction des villes,” an essay he never published. A celestial shot of the Pantheon’s coffered appears in Urbanisme, and his images of the Parthenon are famously contrasted with cars in Vers une architecture. Other pictures, particularly one of an off-kilter corner of the Doge’s Palace, looked as if they could have been snapped yesterday by an average Venetian tourist.

Before his promotional machinery was in full working order, Le Corbusier himself could be seen in the photographs. In one shot, he sits on a sofa next to his brother Albert and the artist Amédée Ozenfant, an Eastern European vase perched on his head, aping a peasant woman. In another, from Istanbul, he and traveling companion August Klipstein act out a harem scene. One would have liked to hear more about Le Corbusier in drag.

Opposite the travel diaries were the villas Jeanneret designed back home. Le Corbusier suppressed almost all of his early Swiss work, beginning his Oeuvre complete with the last and most mysterious of these projects, the Villa Schwob. Analyzed by Colin Rowe for its relationship to Italian Mannerism, and by Vincent Scully for its connection to Robert Venturi’s complexities, this villa appeared in the Bard exhibition as a transitional work, rather than as the prodigious start of his French career. The exhibition model of the house—an international medley—read as the “after” to the 1906–7 Villa Fallet’s “before,” a steep-gabled Swiss chalet. The Villa Schwob’s local nickname, “Villa Turque,” suggested the strongest influence: houses he sketched in Istanbul, their second stories pushed out and perched on white stucco walls. The cutaway model revealed a quotation from his trip to Pompeii: the double-height atrium at the center of the villa turns it into a court house for a cold climate, composed of three-sided rooms oriented inward. A third model, of the 1912 Villa Jeanneret-Perret, instructively included the site, allowing one to observe the architect’s nascent sense of how to position a white volume in the landscape.

Given the wealth of new material on display, it seems petty to criticize the installation at Bard. Nonetheless, it was surprising that in a show intended to present a new vision of a well-known figure to the public, Le Corbusier before Le Corbusier should be so difficult for the layperson to penetrate. Overall, the exhibition was weak on visual juxtaposition, forcing visitors to read the accompanying gallery brochure for references and comparisons to the post-Le Corbusier work, and apparently counting on their having the necessary architectural image bank. The early casier standard was shown on the first floor as part of an introduction to the show; in a perfect world, a second casier would have been installed on the third floor next to Le Corbusier’s desk for his mother and
bookcase for Hermann Ditisheim, neoclassical predecessors to the modular cabinet. A series of photographs of the Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau was attached to the wall next to the casier, but the image of that cabinet as installed in the pavilion (upstairs, near the boudoir) was, oddly, missing.

The collagelike organization also made for some abrupt and confusing transitions. On the second floor, for example, one moved from the absorbing travel sketches to the villa models to a mystifying display of the Gothic versus the classical influence on Le Corbusier’s work, a topic that should have been left to Pierre Vaise’s article in the catalogue. One can see the reasons for contrasting the plan of Versailles with the Ville Contemporaine, and it is instructive that Le Corbusier studied eighteenth-century plans at the Bibliothèque Nationale, but these connections, and their relevance, are inadequately explained in the brochure. Wall text, while inelegant, might have made this room comprehensible. The tightness of the space in the Bard mansion meant that some important works were placed in narrow hallways. It was easy to miss the original drawings of the Dom-ino scheme, revealed in the exhibition as contemporaneous with a suite of green-striped drawing-room furniture. It was wonderful, however, to walk into an exhibition on a modern architect and be greeted by a wall of Diana-themed toile wallpaper, as on the first floor. The shock—Could he really have chosen this?—accomplished much of what the curators set out to do: to liberate Le Corbusier, at least in his youthful enthusiasms, from the straightjacket of white walls.

The weaknesses of the show as installed at Bard are nowhere present in the accompanying publication, whose checklist provides extensive scholarly interpretations of every object shown in New York and Baden, as well as many others. In its pages, the links to later works are made visually and verbally, though the scope of comparison is largely limited to the 1920s and 1930s. One can imagine further connections to Le Corbusier’s failed plans for Algiers in the 1940s, or his stylistic turn toward the vernacular in the 1950s. The approaches to the Swiss villas, in particular, seem reminiscent of the pilgrim’s route to Ronchamp.

Given the quality and extent of the reproductions in the catalogue, the exhibition could be seen as superfluous but for the excitement of seeing a few key works in three dimensions. La Cheminée, one of Le Corbusier’s 1918 Purist paintings, shown on the first floor, is perhaps the best illustration of his maxim (from Vers une architecture), “Architecture is the masterly, correct, and magnificient play of volumes arranged under light.” Mme Jeanneret-Perret’s desk and Ditisheim’s bookcase were striking objects in themselves, but also immediately made clear Rück’s argument for the connection between Le Corbusier’s thoughts on furniture and architecture, meuble and immeuble. If the book is expansive and stately, the exhibition better captured the restless vitality, variety, and color of Le Corbusier’s twenties, with so much material and so many observations packed into such small rooms.

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Publication related to the exhibition: